

# Women level with business leaders on unemployment

By Kathy Didyk

When you're unemployed, sometimes the hardest part of the job search could be just getting some face-time with a business higher-up.

But women seeking work had that opportunity recently when Times Change Women's Employment Service hosted a visit between clients and executive business leaders with the help of Seeing is Believing, a program created by Canadian Business for Social Responsibility (CBSR).

The program encourages executives to look beyond traditional philanthropy and engage in hands-on community revitalization. As part of this year's theme of "Employability and Women's Economic Independence", executive leaders came face-to-face with the challenges of women's unemployment through client testimonials.

Each client spoke candidly about her personal experiences and barriers in seeking career transition and finding employment, while highlighting her

success with the help of Times Change.

One example is Lynda (surname not given) who, after taking the career planning workshop is a part-time student at George Brown College with a promising future in her new field. But two years ago, her life presented a much different scenario.

"I was completely lost and frustrated dealing with two major crises at the same time: a marriage breakdown and a cancer diagnosis," said Lynda. "A good friend recom-

mended Times Change to help me find a new career direction. The friendly staff and the various workshops gave me support and encouragement to go back to school and pursue a career helping other women empower themselves. Meeting the executives provided me with the opportunity to share my challenges as an unemployed woman seeking a new career direction," explained Lynda. For her and seven other Times Change clients, sharing their experiences with high level executives was "exciting

and hopeful. I feel grateful that these business leaders want to contribute their skills and resources to people in the community."

The President and CEOs of Alterna Savings and Groupe Aeroplan were among the seven executives who visited Times Change to meet with clients.

Julie Warrington, Educational Counsellor noted that, "In harsh economic times, the challenges of women who are searching for work or underemployed become even more

immediate." She confirmed that Times Change was thrilled to be included in this year's program - it provided clients with a rare opportunity to share stories with corporate leaders, share their knowledge and gain access to valuable resources.

Times Change Women's Employment Service is a non-profit community agency that provides free employment, career and educational counselling for women. Visit their offices at 365 Bloor St. E. or call (416) 927-1900.

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